



# THE VIRGIN ISLANDS POLICE DEPARTMENT

“To Protect and Serve”

## Office of the Commissioner

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### **Parents Hold the Key to Teen Driver Safety**

**U.S. Virgin Islands** – Nationally, motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for teens 15 to 18 years old. According to the National Traffic Highway Safety Administration (NHTSA), in 2021, there were 2,608 people killed in crashes involving teen drivers, of which 861 were fatal for the teen driver. To address this issue, the Virgin Islands Office of Highways Safety (VIOHS) joined the nation from October 15-21, 2023, in promoting National Teen Driver Safety Week.

In the territory, data for teen drivers are equally critical. In FY 2022, there were 429 crashes involving teen drivers – 9.36% of the year’s total crashes. In addition to inexperience and immaturity, other contributing factors to teen injuries and fatalities on the roadways include speeding, alcohol use, distracted and drowsy driving, transporting disruptive passengers, and seat belt non-compliance. “Communicating your expectations for safe traffic behaviors to your teen is essential,” stated VI Police Department Commissioner Ray A. Martinez. “Safe driving reduces your young driver’s risks for crash-related injuries and fatalities, while keeping other road users safe.” When establishing clear expectations for safe driving practices with their teens, parents should also communicate consequences for noncompliance that are significant to the teen driver and consistently enforced.

A safe driver is alert, provides full attention to the task of driving and exercises preventive strategies to keep vehicle occupants and other road users safe. “Teens must be encouraged to remain focused, drive sober, wear seat belts on every ride and adhere to the rules of the road,” urged VIOHS Director, Daphne O’Neal. Expectations set for teen drivers must also extend to their passengers, who are often their peers. “For teens, driving is a privilege that parents must be willing to revoke to protect both novice drivers and the community at large,” advised Director O’Neal.

For more safe driving practices and information on creating parent-teen driving agreements, contact the Virgin Islands Office of Highway Safety through Director O’Neal at [daphne.oneal@vipd.vi.gov](mailto:daphne.oneal@vipd.vi.gov) or Occupant Protection Planner/Coordinator Denise Gomes at [denise.gomes@vipd.vi.gov](mailto:denise.gomes@vipd.vi.gov). You may also contact the office via telephone at (340) 772-3025 or (340) 473-7383.

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